

MEMO

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February 3, 2009

TO: Attorneys of Sixth Judicial District

FROM: Carroll Edmondson, District Court Administrator

RE: Implementation of Budget Cuts in 6th District for FY 09

Like all other areas of state government, the Iowa Judicial Branch will be undergoing severe budget cuts this fiscal year as well as next fiscal year. As of this writing, I don't know exactly how much of a budget reduction will be imposed on the Judicial Branch this fiscal year. The only thing we know with any certainty is that our budget will be reduced and that we don't have a lot of flexibility in how we handle the cuts since ninety-six percent of our budget is personnel.

During a conference call with chief judges and district court administrators on January 28, 2009 the state court administrator reviewed the Judicial Branch's budgetary priorities and goals established by the Supreme Court. The chief justice recently promulgated a supervisory order directing districts to implement the Judicial Branch's budgetary goals.

The main priority of the Supreme Court is to avoid employee furloughs if all possible, and if not possible, to keep the number of furlough days to a minimum. To achieve this goal the Supreme Court has instructed districts to take necessary measures to reduce statewide travel expenses by sixty percent. This will require each district to make substantial changes in judicial assignments, delivery of court services, and scheduling time frames.

For the Sixth Judicial District Chief Judge Remley has adopted the following measures to comply with the Supreme Court's budget directive:

1. Effective February 2, 2009 all resident Johnson County district court judges will be assigned to Johnson County for the remainder of the year. Linn County judges will be assigned to Linn County and the four rural counties. There will be exceptions for special assignments already scheduled and for coverage for vacations, sickness, and quasi-judicial leave. The 2009 district judge rotation will be revised to incorporate this change.
2. Effective February 9, 2009 court service days in Benton, Iowa, Jones and Tama Counties will be reduced to one day per week. The court service day for Benton, Iowa and Tama will be Thursday and the court service day for Jones will be Friday. However, for the month of February the days set aside for child support recovery cases will remain as scheduled (Jones – Feb. 12; Benton – Feb. 13; and Tama

Feb. 20). A decision on whether to continue separate days for CSRU beyond February will be made after further assessment of the feasibility of incorporating CSRU cases into a weekly court service day.

3. Effective February 9, 2009 trials in counties without a resident district court judge will be limited to criminal cases with speedy trial demands and criminal cases without speedy demands where the defendant is in custody. For civil cases, if the parties agree to change venue to a county with a resident judge, court staff will move the case to another county contingent upon available courtroom space in counties with resident judges. If the parties do not agree to a venue change, civil cases will be continued. Non-speedy demand criminal cases will also be continued unless the defendant is in custody.
4. Juvenile court cases are exempt from the travel restrictions. The juvenile court schedules and judicial rotations in all six counties will remain as they are now.
5. There will be no changes in the magistrate court schedule. However, we are considering changes in how magistrates are assigned to handle conflict of interest cases in counties outside their home counties.